

GENE AMMONS

THE GENE AMMONS STORY: THE 78 ERA




Prestige

1. BYE BYE 3:00
2. CHABOOTIE 3:01
3. WALKIN' 3:00
4. EASY GLIDE 2:56
5. I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE 2:38
6. BACK IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD 3:12
7. SWEET JENNIE LOU 2:35
8. SEVEN ELEVEN 2:53
9. WHEN I DREAM OF YOU 2:54
10. A LOVER IS BLUE 2:46
11. 'ROUND ABOUT 1 A.M. 3:01
12. JUG 2:48
13. WOW 2:52
14. BLUE AND SENTIMENTAL 3:08
15. AMMONS BOOGIE 2:58
16. ECHO CHAMBER BLUES 3:12
17. HOT STUFF 2:07
18. THEM THERE EYES 2:15
19. WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN 3:07
20. ARCHIE 2:44
21. UNDECIDED 2:38
22. (IT WILL HAVE TO DO) UNTIL THE REAL THING COMES ALONG 2:38
23. SOCK 2:46
24. WHAT I SAY 2:36
25. THIS IS ALWAYS 2:42
26. BLUE ROLLER 2:42
27. LOVE IS HERE TO STAY 3:43

GENE AMMONS—tenor saxophone
with

CLARENCE ANDERSON, CHARLES BATEMAN,
ART BLAKEY, GENE EASTON, MATTHEW GEE,
BENNIE GREEN, JO JONES, DUKE JORDAN,
JUNIOR MANCE, BILL MASSEY, EARL MAY,
TOMMY POTTER, TEDDY STEWART,
SONNY STITT, NATE WOODYARD,
RUDY WILLIAMS, GENE WRIGHT, and others

Originally produced by BOB WEINSTOCK

This reissue produced by BOB PORTER

Recorded between 1950 and 1955.

All of this material was originally issued on
Prestige 78-RPM singles. In many cases, it has
been necessary to use recordings as the source
material for this reissue.

Audio restoration and digital remastering, 1992—
Kirk Felton (Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

NoNOISE reprocessing by the Sonic Solutions System

Art direction—Phil Carroll

Lettering design—Lance Anderson

Photo courtesy of the Ralph J. Gleason Collection

Since the maximum playing time of a single CD could not
accommodate the entire length of the original double-
album release, "I Want to Be Loved", "Blues for Turfers,"
and "Rock-Roll" have been deleted.

TOTAL TIME 78:00

Total time has been rounded off to the nearest minute.

AAD

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COMPACT
DISC
DIGITAL AUDIO



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1. **BYE BYE** 3:00
(Jimmy Mundy) Carbaby Music-ASCAP
2. **CHABOOTIE** 3:01
(Richard Carpenter) Richcar Music-BMI
3. **WALKIN'** 3:00
(R. Carpenter) Richcar-BMI
4. **EASY GLIDE** 2:56
(Mundy) Colgems-EMI Music-ASCAP
5. **I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING
BUT LOVE** 2:38
(Fields-McHugh) Mills Music-ASCAP
6. **BACK IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD** 3:12
(Jolson-Rose-Dreyer) Bourne Co./Larry Spier Inc.-ASCAP
7. **SWEET JENNIE LOU** 2:35
(Mundy-Carpenter) Warner Bros. Music-ASCAP
8. **SEVEN ELEVEN** 2:53
(R. Carpenter-Williams) Screen Gems-EMI Music-BMI
9. **WHEN I DREAM OF YOU** 2:54
(Carpenter-Hines) Sherwin Music-ASCAP
10. **A LOVER IS BLUE** 2:46
(Carpenter-Mundy-Woode) MCA Music-ASCAP
11. **'ROUND ABOUT 1 A.M.** 3:01
(Carpenter-Ammons) Richcar-BMI
12. **JUG** 2:48
(Ammons) Richcar-BMI
13. **WOW** 2:52
(Matthew Ge) Twenty-Eight Street Music-ASCAP
14. **BLUE AND SENTIMENTAL** 3:08
(Basic-Livingston-Davis) Warner Bros/
Hallmark Music/Polygram Intl.-ASCAP
15. **AMMONS BOOGIE** 2:58
(Bill Massey) Prestige-BMI
16. **ECHO CHAMBER BLUES** 3:12
(Massey-Carpenter) Prestige/Richcar-BMI
17. **HOT STUFF** 2:07
(R. Carpenter) Richcar Music-BMI
18. **THEM THERE EYES** 2:15
(Pinkard-Tracey-Tauber) Bourne Co.-ASCAP
19. **WHEN THE SAINTS GO
MARCHING IN** 3:07
(trad.)
20. **ARCHIE** 2:44
(R. Carpenter) Richcar-BMI
21. **UNDECIDED** 2:38
(Robin-Shavers) MCA Music-ASCAP
22. **(IT WILL HAVE TO DO) UNTIL THE
REAL THING COMES ALONG** 2:38
(Cahn-Chaplin-Freeman-Holiner-Nichols)
Chappell & Co./Cahn Music-ASCAP
23. **SOCK** 2:46
(Ammons) Prestige-BMI
24. **WHAT I SAY** 2:36
(Walter Morris) Prestige-BMI
25. **THIS IS ALWAYS** 2:42
(Warren-Gordon) Warner Bros.-ASCAP
26. **BLUE ROLLER** 2:42
(Billy Valentine) Prestige-BMI
27. **LOVE IS HERE TO STAY** 3:43
(Gershwin-Gershwin) Gershwin Publishing-ASCAP

Since the maximum playing time of a single CD could not accommodate the entire length of the original double-album release, "I Want to Be Loved," "Blues for Turfers," and "Rock-Roll" have been deleted.



PCD-24058-2

This is the first of several twofers documenting the recording career of Gene Ammons, equally well known to the jazz world as Jug. Ammons had a widely varied recording career, even though he was under contract to the same record label—Prestige—for most of the last 25 years of his life.

The career of Gene Ammons was certainly one of the most unique in jazz history. His work in the 1940s was centered in two of the most formidable big bands of the modern era (Billy Eckstine, Woody Herman's Second Herd); his 1950-52 association with Sonny Stitt is always recalled in glowing terms by fans; while his later quartet with George Freeman on guitar in the 1970s was one of the hottest attractions of its time.

As a tenor saxophonist he was a product of the diverse cross-pollination of styles available in the early 1940s. As far as phrasing is concerned he was a Lester Young man (more post-war than pre-war Pres in actuality) but in contrast to other Youngmen his sound was big—closer to Herschel Evans and Coleman Hawkins. To make the eclecticism complete, there was a splash of Illinois Jacquet—especially in his *approach* to a solo. The dramatic approach in constructing a solo, whether it be a hard stomping up-tempo piece or a ballad, was present in Gene's playing from the start.

While with the Eckstine band he was *the* featured soloist. In all the Eckstine recordings by the traveling band, Ammons was the tenor man except on "Lonesome Lover Blues" (a Dexter Gordon feature) and "Blowin' the Blues Away," which he split with Dexter. This despite the presence of Lucky Thompson, Wardell Gray, Budd Johnson, Charlie Rouse, and others.

In Woody's band he replaced Stan Getz—an honor, for openers. In many respects his playing changed the character of that band enough so that aficionados think of it as Herd 2-A. While with the Herman band, his recorded solos were few, but in "More Moon" he left a solo that is still quoted today. Had he been featured with Ellington or Basie

(he did make some small band sides with Basie), he would have been canonized.

Regarding his own work on records, he was successful from the beginning. His Mercury debut introduced his version of "Red Top" while a 1950 Chess session produced another classic, "My Foolish Heart." This latter performance was once named by Billie Holiday as one of her favorite records.

An unusual achievement of Ammons's is the fact that he had *hit* records in four different decades. Sixties hits included "Canadian Sunset," "Exactly Like You," "Angel Eyes," and "Ca'Purange (Jungle Soul)." During the 1970s he created unforgettable ballad classics in "Didn't We" and "My Way." These recordings were accomplished with all manner of accompaniment: big band, quartet, organ band, Latin percussion, strings, bebop, funk, or just straight-ahead jazz (remember "The Happy Blues"?). It is safe to say that no other tenorman has been able to approach that popularity over that lengthy a time.

This particular reissue celebrates the Gene Ammons-Sonny Stitt band which was such a popular attraction in the early 1950s. Included here are the highlights of this band's recordings—except of course for the celebrated Ammons-Stitt tenor battles (which will appear in a later volume).

Just how Ammons and Stitt ever got together in the first place is a subject for consideration, for they were opposites in so many ways. Stitt is lean where Ammons was heavy. Sonny is stern where Jug was easygoing. Gene was a careful craftsman when it came to the entertainment aspects of his presentation while Sonny displays little or no interest in the frills of a performance. Sonny had shed his drug problems about the time Jug acquired his. According to Sonny the band was just put together by Richard Carpenter, longtime manager of each man, yet their friendship was a solid one, based on mutual respect. One contributing factor was that their improvisational methods were so different. Stitt was and is the consummate technician, while Jug was all feeling. Neither could compete in the other's metier and each had the good sense to recognize this.

After Sonny left in 1952, Gene continued to

use the same basic unit, which was modeled on the little-big band concept so popular in the late Forties and early Fifties. Illinois Jacquet, Arnett Cobb, Charlie Ventura, Willis Jackson, Earl Bostic, James Moody, and countless others all shared the concept of a four-horn front line plus rhythm. In many cases, especially on ballads, the band was used merely as a backdrop and a final chord but the other horns generally got a share of the solo space on the blues and the up-tempo numbers. One of the least investigated areas of jazz research is the arrangements utilized by these bands. There are many performances here that are near-perfect illustrations of small band arrangement. Jimmy Mundy is responsible for much of the arranging here, but much of the fourth side is probably the work of Gerry Valentine.

The band was an incredibly popular one during its life although it never received much publicity in the jazz press. This is largely because its itinerary included not only the downtown New York joints like Birdland, but places like the Earl Theater in Philadelphia or the Apollo where they had a large black following. Clubs and theaters in heavily black areas have never gotten much press, even today.

The music here represents the uncertainty of the times. By 1950 it was clear that bebop would not become a music with any mass appeal. The influence of rhythm and blues was being felt to a great extent and the jukebox was a very powerful factor in what was recorded. If one considers the ubiquity of the guitar in the music of the past decade, one should remember that the tenor sax had a comparable position in the music of the late Forties and early Fifties.

More than any other player of his generation, Gene Ammons understood the value of versatility in style and programming. His ability to accomplish what the music called for while retaining *his* identity is his greatest accomplishment.

As for the music included here:

"Bye Bye" is almost "Soft Winds," and this performance is very typical of the riff-based tunes of the period that were combinations of the modern approach with a throwback to an earlier era.

"Chabootie" and "Walkin'" are very similar to

each other. The origins of "Walkin'" have been in dispute for years but this was the first recording of the tune, which was originally titled "Gravy." "Chabootie" has a splendid baritone solo from Sonny Stitt. Whenever the band recorded under Jug's name Sonny would play in the sax section on baritone and vice versa. Alas, Gene never soloed on baritone. "Walkin'" has exceptional Duke Jordan and a chorus from Benny Green, a classmate of Ammons's at DuSable High School in Chicago. Also of interest here is the presence of Art Blakey, Jug's favorite drummer and a close associate (1944-47) in the Billy Eckstine band.

The sugary arrangement of "Back in Your Own Backyard" presents the complete working band for the first time. Players like Jordan, Potter, Blakey, and Jo Jones recorded with the band but never were part of the working unit.

"Sweet Jennie Lou" presents Jug the vocalist! Never before issued on LP, this is a real rarity and a very pleasant job of singing by a man who could really sing on his horn.

"Seven Eleven" has another Stitt baritone solo. Sonny has always sounded so good on baritone it is a shame he doesn't use it today.

"When I Dream of You" and "A Lover Is Blue" are both ballads. There is an obvious attempt to repeat the success of "My Foolish Heart" here. Jug sticks close to the melody in each case and stops for a coda of his own.

"Round About 1 A.M." reprises the singer in Jug. It's a blues this time and the opening of Gene's solo is one of those one-note clear-the-decks entrances that became his trademark in the early Sixties.

"Jug" is actually a nod to another compatriot, Dexter Gordon, since the melody is identical to "Dexter Digs In." Jug digs in here set up by band riffs. A *steaming* performance—the kind Jug avoided later in his career.

"Wow" by Matthew Gee was a hit for the old Joe Morris band, combining a bop line with some r&b feel.

"Blue and Sentimental" is a ballad with tenor sax lineage back to Herschel Evans. The recording is heavily echoed to add to the jukebox appeal.

There is more of an r&b feel to the next two titles. When these were issued the first time they were on red label 78s in a numerical series generally devoted to rhythm and blues. Ammons's father Albert (the best of the boogie woogie pianists) would have been proud of this one. Despite the obviously commercial nature of the arrangement, note Gene's ability to play effectively in his way. The way-down "Echo Chamber Blues" has a sound very similar to some of his Chess 78s ("The Last Mile," for example). Gene has a brother who is a preacher and he adds some effective proclamations of his own with the funky piano underneath.

The next several titles are more straight-ahead in concept. Very consistent, high-quality Ammons here. (Clarence "Sleepy" Anderson was a member of many of Jug's groups and recorded with him again in 1961; he died in the mid-Sixties in Chicago.)

Charlie Shavers's evergreen "Undecided" is given a medium tempo treatment as we return to the basic band. This one has Jug playing all the way.

Gene left Prestige in 1952, doing one session for Decca and spending almost two years with the Chicago-based United Records. "Sock" and "What I Say" are from his homecoming session. The latter opens with a baritone solo by Gene Easton, another Chicagoan who doubled on tenor in the band and took Sonny Stitt's place in the tenor battles. Very hip band voicing here.

Given a blindfold test, I suspect most experts would peg the chart of "This Is Always" as the work of Tadd Dameron. The trumpet lead and arrangement backgrounds are definitely in that vein. There is no way of knowing for certain, but it is a beautiful job regardless of who did it. Earl Coleman is associated with the song, having recorded it with Charlie Parker in 1947. Coleman had recorded previously with Ammons for Mercury in the 1940s. Valentine definitely did arrange "Blue Roller" with its Basie feel.

The end of this LP marks the end of one distinct facet of Gene Ammons's career. His recordings for the remainder of the 1950s would feature him in lengthy all-star jam session settings. Always the listener and quick to recognize the qualities of new situations that he could use, Gene Ammons would be ready for the LP era. Yet as these recordings clearly show, he had already left his own highly personal stamp on the music of the period immediately following World War II.

—Bob Porter

These notes adapted from the original album liner.



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This issue has been prepared by transferring the best available source material to digital tape, which has then been reprocessed using the unique Sonic Solutions computerized NoNOISE SYSTEM. NoNOISE is designed to remove most, and in some cases, virtually all imperfections and aural distractions (surface noise, pops and clicks, scratches, rumble, etc.) commonly associated with vintage material, without substantially altering the basic recorded sound. Thereafter, only minimal re-equalization has been applied; the goal has been to preserve the musical qualities and ambience of the original recordings in as clean and clear a form as possible.

(NoNOISE is a registered trademark of Sonic Solutions)

GENE AMMONS—tenor saxophone
(vocal on #7 and 11)
with

On selections #1-4:

BILL MASSEY—trumpet
EPH GREENLEA—trombone (#1 only)
BENNIE GREEN—trombone (#2-4)
SONNY STITT—baritone saxophone
DUKE JORDAN—piano
TOMMY POTTER—bass
JO JONES—drums (#1 only)
ART BLAKEY—drums (#2-4)
Recorded March 5 (#1) and April 26, 1950 (#2-4).

#5:

DUKE JORDAN—piano
GENE WRIGHT—bass
WES LANDERS—drums
Recorded June 28, 1950.

#6-8:

BILL MASSEY—trumpet
MATTHEW GEE—trombone
SONNY STITT—baritone saxophone
CHARLES BATEMAN—piano
GENE WRIGHT—bass
WES LANDERS—drums
Recorded July 27, 1950.

#9-10:

JUNIOR MANCE—piano
GENE WRIGHT—bass
WES LANDERS—drums
Recorded October 28, 1950.

#11-14:

BILL MASSEY—trumpet
MATTHEW GEE—trombone
SONNY STITT—baritone saxophone
JUNIOR MANCE—piano
GENE WRIGHT—bass
TEDDY STEWART—drums
Recorded January 16, 1951.

#15-16:

BILL MASSEY—trumpet
ELI DABNEY—trombone
RUDY WILLIAMS—baritone saxophone
CLARENCE ANDERSON—piano
EARL MAY—bass
TEDDY STEWART—drums
Recorded June 29, 1951.

#17-20:

CLARENCE ANDERSON—piano
GENE WRIGHT—bass
TEDDY STEWART—drums
Recorded August 14, 1951.

#21-22:

BILL MASSEY—trumpet
ELI DABNEY—trombone
SONNY STITT—baritone saxophone
CLARENCE ANDERSON—piano
ERNIE SHEPHERD—bass
TEDDY STEWART—drums
Recorded November 14, 1951.

#23-27:

NATE WOODYARD—trumpet
HENDERSON CHAMBERS—trombone
GENE EASTON—baritone saxophone
JOHN HOUSTON—piano
BEN STUBERVILLE—bass
GEORGE BROWN—drums
Vocal on "This Is Always" by EARL COLEMAN.
Recorded February 8, 1955 (#23-24) and
November 4, 1955 (#25-27).

Originally produced by BOB WEINSTOCK

This reissue produced by BOB PORTER

Audio restoration and digital remastering,
1992—Kirk Felton (Fantasy Studios, Berkeley)

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